The Nature and Neceſſity of a Chriſtian Converſation.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN,

AT

Her *Royal Chappel* at St. *James*'s,

On *Sunday Nov.* 19. 1704.

By Sir *WILLIAM DAWES*, Baronet, D.D. and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majeſty.

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PHILIPIANS I. 27.

The former part of the Verse. ..... *Only let your Converſation be, as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt.*

ST. *Paul* having, in the fore-going part of this Chapter, mention'd *his Bonds*, which he was in at *Rome*, for the ſake of the Goſpel, at the time of his writing this Epiſtle, takes occaſion from them to declare his readineſs to *magnifie Chriſt in his Body, whether it* ſhould *be by Life or by Death.* And the reaſon of this his readineſs he tells us was, becauſe he was ſure to be a very great

Verſes 7. 13, 14.

Verſ. 20.

great Gainer either way. If he ſhould live on, he doubted not but he ſhould likewiſe go on in faithfully and induſtriouſly Preaching the Goſpel, as he had done, and, by this means, in promoting his Maſter's Honour, ſetting forward the Salvation of his Brethren, and, by ſo doing, amplifying and enlarging, thro' GOD's grace and mercy, his own Reward in Heaven. *To me to live is Chriſt*, and if I *live in the Fleſh, this is the Fruit of my Labour.* If he ſhould Die, he was ready even then to comfort himſelf, with thoſe bleſſed Expectations and Aſſurances which he had, that, as ſoon as ever he ſhould *be abſent from the Body*, he ſhould *be preſent with the Lord*; and that there was *laid up a Crown of Righteouſneſs for him*, in Heaven. *To me to Die is gain.* And, having ſuch a glorious Proſpect on both ſides, he knows not what to wiſh for; *yet what I ſhall chooſe, I wot not, for I am in a ſtrait betwixt two*; on the one ſide, *having a deſire to depart*, to get out of this troubleſome World (troubleſome to him, to be ſure, who had *ſuffer'd* ſo many dreadful things from it) *and to be with Chriſt* his dear lov'd Lord, in the preſent poſſeſſion of his Joys, which was *far better*, infinitely moſt eligible *for him*; if he had regarded himſelf only; on the other ſide, being conſcious to himſelf, that to *abide in the* Fleſh, to continue in this life, *was more needful for them*, his Flock at *Philippi*, who would be more likely to make an happy proficiency in the Faith of Chriſt, and to draw near to perfection in it, under him their Spiritual Father and Guide, than any other. And this Conſideration it is which turns

Verſ. 21, 22.

2 *Cor.* 5. 8.
2 *Tim.* 4. 8.
Verſ. 21. 22, 23.

2 *Cor.* 11. 23, *&c.*

Verſ. 24.

the

the Scale, and determineth the choice of our moſt charitable Apoſtle (that true lover of Souls indeed, that true Pattern of a Paſtoral Affection and concern for the Flock of Chriſt, who for their ſakes, could be contented to put off the taking poſſeſſion, even of *Paradiſe* it ſelf, for ſome time) nay, and even begets in him a firm perſwaſion that for this reaſon, GOD would be pleas'd to grant him a longer continuance among them: For this I take to be the ſenſe of the Words which follow. *And having* Verſ. 25. *this confidence*, that *to abide in the Fleſh, is more needful for you; I know*, I believe, or am verily perſwaded, *that I ſhall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of Faith.* However, be this as it would, and as it ſhould pleaſe GOD, to whom he entirely left it; yet one thing he tells them, he muſt not forget to put them in mind of, a thing of the higheſt Moment and Importance, a thing of abſolute neceſſity towards their eternal Welfare. Nay indeed the very *one thing needful* (a *Luke* 10. better Leſſon he could not poſſibly teach them if 42. he were preſent with them; a better Legacy he could not poſſibly bequeath to them, if he was never to ſee them any more) *Only let your Converſation*, the whole management and conduct of your Lives, *be as becomes, or is agreeable to the Goſpel of Chriſt.*

And as the Apoſtle's very earneſt manner, in which he recommends this thing to us in my Text, is an Argument of the very great weight and ſtreſs which he laid upon it; ſo likewiſe the vehemence with which he preſſeth it in ſome other of his Epiſtles,

is an evident proof of the ſame. As, in that to the *Epheſians* 4. 1. *I beſeech ye that you walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called.* In that to the *Coloſſians*, 1. 9, 10. *We do not ceaſe to pray for you, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing.* And in the Second to the *Theſſalonians*, 2. 11, 12. *You know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, (as a Father doth his Children) that ye would walk worthy of GOD, who hath called you unto his Kingdom and Glory.*

That therefore we may be ſure rightly to underſtand, and faithfully to follow, this important Advice, I ſhall in my following Diſcourſe, endeavour to ſhew you

I. *Firſt*, when we may be truly ſaid to have our *Converſation, as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt.*

II. *Secondly*, What ſtrict Obligations we lye under to uſe our utmoſt care ſo to have our Converſation.

I. *Firſt*, When we may be truly ſaid to have our *Converſation, as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt.* And the general Anſwer to this Queſtion is very eaſy, *viz.* That then this may be truly ſaid of us, when we lead ſuch lives, as the Goſpel of Chriſt requires that we ſhould lead; ſuch lives as are ſuitable to thoſe pure and refin'd Precepts, thoſe noble and illuſtrious Examples, thoſe powerful and all-conquering Aſſiſtances, thoſe glorious and encouraging Rewards, which are there ſet before us, and offer'd to

us. But, because general answers are apt to have but very little effect, I add therefore more particularly, that this may then, and only then, truly be said of us, When

First, We use our utmost *Care*, *Pains*, and *Diligence*, to *perform* and to *avoid every* such thing, as GOD has, *any where*, commanded us to perform or to avoid. And I.

Secondly, Do all this, in the *simplicity* and *sincerity* of our Hearts, upon true Christian Principles, and with the entire concurrence of our Minds, Wills, and Affections. And II.

Thirdly, Do it all, to the *utmost perfection* that we are capable of, in full proportion to our Endowments and Abilities, and with an hearty desire and endeavour to grow and improve, every Day more and more, in the knowledge and practice of our Duty. And III.

Fourthly, Are *constant* and *persevere* in doing this, throughout the whole course of our Lives; or, at least, if at any time we happen to *slip* or *fall*, do all that we can to *rise* again, and *recover* our selves, by a *timely*, *sincere*, and *effectual* Repentance. And IIII.

Lastly, After all our best endeavours to perform our Duty, after all our best performances of it, ascribe the *Praise* and *Glory* of them all to GOD, and entirely rely upon his *free Grace and Goodness in Christ* *Lastly.*

Jesus;

Jesus, and, not in the least upon our own *Merit*, for his acceptance and rewarding of them.

I. *First*, When we use our utmost *Care*, *Pains*, and *Diligence* to *perform* and to *avoid every* such thing, as GOD has, *any where*, commanded us to perform or to avoid.

I say, our utmost *Care*, *Pains*, and *Diligence*, because the state of a Christian, in this Life, is constantly represented in Scripture, as a state of great and continual danger and temptation; a state of *War*, of *Fighting* and *Wrestling*, not only against our own Lusts and Passions, against the Charms and Allurements, the Customs and Fashions of a wicked World, and our own corrupt Nature, which always takes part with them (which we cannot but know and feel to be formidable Enemies enough) but against *Principalities*, *against Powers*, *against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World*, *against Spiritual Wickedness in high Places*; and consequently, a state, where we have need to exert all our *Strength*, use all our *Prudence* and *Caution*, be continually upon our *Guard*, and summon all our *Forces* together, for our *Defence*, *Security*, and *Preservation*. And hence it is, that we are so often exhorted to *take heed*, *to Watch*, *to be Circumspect*, *to be Sober*, *to be Vigilant*, *to use all Diligence*, *to Labour*, *to Strive*, *to Fight*, *to resist*, *to resist unto Blood*, &c. From all which it is plain, that those can never pretend to have their Conversation *as becometh the Gospel of Christ*, who will be at none or very little thought

Ephes. 6. 12.

or

or pains for the Service of GOD, and the Salvation of their Souls; much leſs can they, who by their negligence and careleſſneſs, their lazineſs and idleneſs, lay themſelves open to their Enemies, and even invite the *World*, the *Fleſh*, and the *Devil*, to make their aſſaults upon them, and carry them away captive at their pleaſure.

Again, I ſay, *every* ſuch thing as GOD hath commanded, becauſe it is plain from Scripture, that *whoſoever ſhall break one of the leaſt of GOD's Commandments, ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven*, that is, ſhall have no part there at all; and that *whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of all.* So that, according to the terms of the Goſpel, the very ſingle *wilful* habit of any one *plain* Sin, as Whoring, Drinking, Swearing, *&c.* will be ſufficient to Damn a Man, even tho' in other reſpects, he may *keep the Law*, nay, and perhaps have ſome very commendable Qualities into the bargain; a thing which I heartily wiſh all who *call themſelves by the Name of Chriſt*, would ſeriouſly conſider. *Matt.* 5. 19. *James* 2. 10.

Laſtly, I ſay, as GOD has *any where* commanded, becauſe GOD has us'd different ways of making known his Will to Mankind, all which we are oblig'd to attend to, and comply with. The Goſpel indeed, is the laſt and moſt perfect manifeſtation of GOD's Will to Man, but doth by no means aboliſh, and render wholly uſeleſs, thoſe which he had before. Reaſon, tho' it doth not ſhine by much ſo *Laſtly.*

bright and clear as Revelation, yet continues ſtill to give us a very good and uſeful Light, which we muſt take great care how we deſpiſe or neglect; and tho' all the Commandments of the Old Teſtament do not now oblige us, as they did the *Jews*, to whom many of them were peculiar: Yet all the *Moral* Precepts of it, which have an eternal foundation in Reaſon, and the nature of things, and which conſequently all Men are alike concern'd in, are ſtill, and everlaſtingly will be, in as good force as ever. And therefore theſe our Lord expreſly tells us, he came not *to deſtroy, but to fulfil.* So that when any thing plainly appears to us, from the meer light of Reaſon, or the Old Teſtament, to be our Duty, we are not with ſome ſimple People, to queſtion its Authority, and deſpiſe it, as *carnal*, and *out of date*, purely becauſe it may happen not to be particularly and diſtinctly mention'd in the Goſpel, (for, perhaps for this very reaſon, ſome Duties were there omitted, or at leaſt not ſo fully and explicitly mention'd, becauſe they were very plain before, from Reaſon or the Old Teſtament) but we are to look upon it to be as truly the Will of GOD as the Goſpel it ſelf, and to obey it accordingly.

Matt. 5. 17.

II. *Secondly*, When we do all this, in the *ſimplicity* and *ſincerity* of our Hearts, upon true Chriſtian Principles, and with the entire concurrence of our Minds, Wills, and Affections. It is not enough to perform the Duties of the Chriſtian Religion, as the *Phariſees* did thoſe of the Law, only to be *ſeen of Men*, and to *court* their approbation and applauſe,

Matt. 6.

to

to *please* our Superiors, to eſtabliſh a Reputation, and make our ſelves *Popular*, to feed our *Vanity* and *Oſtentation*, or to ſerve ſome other ſuch *worldly* deſign or intereſt; no, they who are Religious only from ſuch Principles, ſerve not *GOD*, but *themſelves*, and, we are aſſured, muſt expect their *reward from Men only*, but ſhall have none from their *Father which is in Heaven*. But the good Chriſtian muſt act upon much higher and nobler Principles, ſuch as the Scripture propoſeth to us: A fear of the Puniſhments, and hope of the rewards of a future ſtate; an *unfeigned* love of his Brethren, and concern for their well-fare in all things, more eſpecially Spiritual; a deep and humble ſenſe of GOD's Supreme Authority over all Mankind, of his infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs in his Government of them, and of his unſpeakable Condeſcenſion and Loving-kindneſs, in ſending his Son *Chriſt Jeſus to ſeek and to ſave them*; and above all, a moſt ardent love of him and our Bleſſed Saviour, and an earneſt deſire to become like them, and to pleaſe them, and to promote their Honour and Glory all over the World. *Luke* 19. 10.

Neither will a bare external Worſhip of GOD, and performance of Religious Duties, ſerve a Chriſtian's turn, but he muſt be careful to *obey from the Heart*, to *worſhip in Spirit and in Truth*, to be *renew'd in the Spirit of his Mind*, to *glorify GOD in his Spirit*, or Mind, and to be *holy in that*, as well as *in his Body*. His inward Man muſt always go along with his outward: He muſt not only come to *Rom.* 6. 17. *Joh.* 4. 24. *Epheſ.* 4. 23. 1 *Cor.* 6. 20, 7. 34

the publick Worſhip of GOD, but he muſt have his thoughts and affections fix'd upon the buſineſs which he is there employed in: He muſt not only Pray, but Pray with Zeal and Fervency; not only hear the Word, but hear it with reverence and attention; not only receive the Communion of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, but receive it with Repentance, Faith and Charity. He muſt *love* his Brother, *not in Word and in Tongue* only, but *in Deed and in Truth*; and, as to himſelf, he muſt be *pure in Heart*, in his very inmoſt Thoughts and Deſires, as well as in his outward Actions, or he will never *ſee GOD*. In fine, whatever he doth, he muſt do it *heartily, as unto the Lord, and not as unto Men, knowing that of the Lord he ſhall receive his Reward.*

1 *John* 3. 18.
Matt. 5. 8.
Coloſſ. 3. 23, 24.

III. *Thirdly*, When we do all this to the utmoſt perfection that we are capable of, in full proportion to our Endowments and Abilities, and with an hearty deſire and endeavour to grow and improve every Day more and more in the knowledge and practice of our Duty. The Chriſtian Religion doth not content it ſelf only with our *doing no Evil*, but with our *abſtaining from all appearance of it*, every thing that may look like the leaſt approach towards it; not barely with our *becoming good*, but with our *approving* or trying *things that are excellent*, and becoming as far as we are able, *perfect*; *perfect* to the very higheſt degree, even *as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*. It requires us, as to *do good*, ſo to be *rich in good Works*, to be

1 *Theſſ.* 5. 22.
Phil. 1. 10.
Matt. 5. 48.

fruitful

fruitful in every sort of them, and according to the several talents which we have received, to give God *his own* again *with Usury*; as not to be *unfruitful* in the Knowledge of Christ, nor to *make Vain* the Grace of God: So *to grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, to *abound more and more*, and to be daily *adding one Grace and Vertue to another*, that so at last we may be *Perfect and Entire, wanting nothing*.

1 Tim. 6. 18. Colos. 1. 10. Matt. 25. 27. 2 Pet. 3. 18. 1 Thes. 4. 1. 2 Pet. 1. 5. James 1. 4.

And Happy, Happy would it be for us, if, according to these Rules, we would be careful, (not to draw as near as we can possibly Suppose, with the utmost stretch of the Law, we lawfully may to the Borders of Sin, which is the pitiful and unchristian Policy of some Men, and has ruin'd its Thousands and its ten Thousands: But) like true Christians, true Haters and Abhorrers of Sin, to keep our selves aloof, at a mighty Distance from it. If, whatever we do in a Religious Way, we would do it *with all our Might*, and be so far from thinking our selves good enough, as to be always *aspiring* and *endeavouring* after higher Degrees of Goodness and Perfection. If those who are *Rich* and *Great* amongst us, would distinguish themselves by the extraordinary Good which they do, by becoming illustrious Examples of Piety and Vertue, by being *ready to Distribute, and willing to Communicate out of their Abundance*, and by using all their Power and Authority, *for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well*. And, if all of us, from the highest to the lowest, would

1 Tim. 6. 18. 1 Pet. 2. 14.

in our respective Stations, and in proportion to our several Abilities, do all that in us lyeth, for the promoting the Interest of Religion, the Honour of God, and the true Happiness of Mankind. Always remembring that we serve a Master, who expects to *Reap where he hath Sown*, and who, *where he hath given much, will require the more.*

Luke 12. 48.

One thing more I would willingly add under this Head, and that is, that as we are to improve in our performance of Religious Duties, so ought we likewise to improve in the Principles upon which we perform them. The *Terror of the Lord*, or a *respect to the recompence of Reward*, are most commonly, and undoubtedly lawfully may be (else the Scriptures would never have proposed them as such) the first Motives or Principles upon which Men are perswaded to become Religious. But then, a sense of GOD's Goodness and infinite Perfection, an entire Love of him and our Blessed Saviour, and a zealous Desire to have their Honour and Glory advanc'd to the utmost, must afterwards take place in our Hearts, and Crown our Righteousness. These are the Noblest and most Generous Principles of Religion, as having least of our Selves, and most of God in them, and therefore these we may be sure will be most acceptable to God. And accordingly we find, that these were the chief Principles upon which the Apostles, and Disciples and first Christians, and, which is more than all these, our Blessed Lord himself acted.

2 Cor. 5. 11. Heb. 11. 26.

Fourthly,

IV. *Fourthly*, When we are conſtant, and perſevere in doing this thro' the whole Courſe of our Lives; or, at leaſt, if at any time we happen to Slip or Fall, do all we can to riſe again, and recover our ſelves by a *timely*, *ſincere*, and *effectual* Repentance. The Converſation of a Chriſtian, is not to be made up of *ſudden Heats and Fits* of Religion, frequently interrupted, and ſometimes wholly laid aſleep for a very long time; nay, and too often chang'd into Heats and Fits of a quite contrary Nature. He is not to *Pray* one Hour, and *Swear* the next: To *come to Church* on the Lord's Day *Morning*, and ſet in for *Drinking* or *Gaming* in the *Afternoon*: To *give Alms* to Day, and *Oppreſs* to Morrow: To have a Week of *Retirement*, and another of *Debauchery*; but he is to be *all of a Piece*, and to carry on an *even* and *ſteady* Courſe of Vertue throughout all the ſeveral Stages, and in all the ſeveral Inſtances, of his whole Life. He is to be *Holy*, as far as he is able, *as GOD is Holy*, that is, to be ſure, with as little a Mixture of Sin and Imperfection, as is poſſible to Man: He is to *ſerve God in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all the Days of his Life*: as ſoon as he *names the Name of Chriſt*, he is to *depart from all Iniquity*, and he is to continue *faithful unto Death*, that he may obtain *a Crown of Life*. This is to be his *firſt* aim, this he is ſincerely to *deſign*, and *labour after*.

1 *Pet.* 1. 15. 16. *Luke* 1 75. 2 *Tim.* 2. 19. *Revel.* 2. 10.

But, becauſe God fore-ſaw that unhappy Man would be too apt to fail of this *continued Righteouſneſs*: he has therefore out of his infinite Mercy and

Com-

Compaſſion towards us, *Secondarily and by way of Recovery* only, left open a Place for *Repentance*, that is, for our *Return* to him, after we have *gone aſtray*, by an *hearty Sorrow* for our Sins paſt, and a *thorough change and amendment* of our whole Converſation for the Future. Never in the leaſt intending that Men ſhould from hence take Occaſion wilfully and deliberately to enter into a Courſe of Sin, purely upon the Proſpect and Encouragement of the Priviledge of Repenting afterwards, (no, this is a moſt notorious Abuſe of God's Mercy, and Sinners had beſt take Care that they do not too far provoke GOD by it) but chiefly that the Surpriz'd and Unwary, the Thoughtleſs and Unconſidering Sinners, the Sinners who have not offended ſo very *Preſumptuouſly*, and with ſuch an *High Hand*, might find ſhelter from Divine Vengeance, in this *City of Refuge*. Provided always that they Repent *in Time*, before they are frighten'd into it by old Age, Sickneſs, or a Death-Bed, (for of theſe the Caſe is very doubtful, becauſe their Repentance ſeems to proceed rather from an entire Regard to themſelves, than any Reſpect to God and his Glory: And if ſo, they have great Reaſon to doubt whither God will accept it,) as alſo that they Repent *ſincerely*, not only to ſerve a preſent Turn, 'till they have recover'd this fit of Sickneſs, that Trouble or Affliction, *&c.* which, God knows, is too commonly the Caſe; but with a full Purpoſe to ſerve God, and to Live to him all the remainder of their Lives; and laſtly, that they do it *effectually*, ſo as to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*, a conſtant Succeſſion of good Works

Matt. 3. 8.

for

for a considerable Time, which alone can Evidence the *Sincerity* and *Efficacy* of their Repentance.

Lastly, When after all our best Endeavours to do our Duty, all our best Performances of it, we ascribe the *Praise* and *Glory* of them all to God, and entirely rely upon his *Free-Grace* and *Goodness in Christ Jesus*, and not in the least upon our own *Merits*, for his acceptance and rewarding of them: For what says the Scripture? *When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable Servants, we have done that which was our Duty to do.* And with great reason sure; since it is GOD *that worketh in us, both to will and to do, according to his good Pleasure*; since we are *not sufficient of our selves, but our sufficiency is of* GOD; and it is he that *makes us perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, thro' Jesus Christ*: And, as to our Reward, we know who hath told us that it is not of *Debt*, but of *Grace*, and that *by Grace we are sav'd, thro' Faith, and that not of our selves, it is the Gift of* GOD; that we are *Accepted*, not for our own sakes, but *in the Beloved*, and, *being justified by his Grace, are made Heirs according to the hope of Eternal Life.* *Lastly.* Luke 17. 10. Phil. 2. 13. 2 Cor. 3. 5. Heb. 13. 21. Romans 3. 4. Chapters. Ephes. 2. 5, 8. Ephes. 1. 6. Titus 3. 7.

You see then that the having *our Conversation as becometh the Gospel of Christ*, comprehendeth in it a vast deal; even all that *Care*, *Pains*, and *Diligence*; all that *universal* Regard to GOD's *Commandments*; all that *Sincerity* and *Simplicity*,

both in *Principles* and *Practice*; all that zealous *aim at*, and *endeavour after Perfection*, that *abounding in good Works*, that *just use* and *improvement* of our respective Talents; all that *Constancy* and *Perseverance* in doing Good; all that *Seasonableness*, *Heartiness*, and *Fruitfulness* in our Repentance; and *Lastly*, all that *Humble-Mindedness*, and *Self-Denial*, of ascribing all the Praise of our best Endeavours and Performances to GOD, and relying wholly upon his Goodness, *in Christ Jesus*, for the Acceptance and Rewarding of them, which are so often requir'd of Christians in Scripture.

And now perhaps, you will be apt to say, *Who is sufficient for* all *these things?* I answer, every Christian (generally speaking) that is but as willing, as he will be made able: For tho' it is true indeed, that of our selves we are *weak* and *unable to do any good thing*, much less all these good things: Yet at the same time it must be consider'd, that we are *strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*, that his *Grace will be sufficient for us*, his *Strength made perfect in* our *Weakness*, and that we shall be enabled to *do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth us*. And upon these Grounds we may be confident, with St. *Paul*, that GOD, who hath *begun a good Work in us, will also perfect it*, even, until, and *in the Day of Jesus Christ*'s coming to Judgment.

Ephes. 6. 10.
2 *Cor.* 12. 9.
Phil. 4. 13.
Phil. 1. 6.

Let us then, without any more delays or excuses, diligently attend to this important, this great, this necessary Work; a Work, without doing of which,

we

we can never be eaſy in our Minds here, never be happy hereafter: As will moſt plainly appear, as ſoon as I ſhall have laid before you,

Secondly, The ſtrict Obligations which we lye under *thus to have our Converſation*. And ſurely theſe Obligations muſt needs be very ſtrict, ſince they bind us with all the force, that our *Reaſon*, our *Gratitude*, our *Juſtice*, and our *Intereſt*, can give them. II.

Firſt, Our *Reaſon*, which, beſides that it will tell us, in the general, that all GOD's Commands are to be obeyed by us, and muſt neceſſarily be agreeable to the higheſt reaſon, from which it is impoſſible for GOD, in the leaſt, to ſwerve; ſo will it more particularly aſſure us, in reſpect of our *Chriſtian Converſation*, that it is the *Converſation* of a *Man*, of a *reaſonable Creature*, moſt highly perfective of a *rational Nature*, and directly tending to make us, in a very great degree, like to GOD himſelf, the Supreme Pattern of all *Reaſon* and *Perfection*. And that the reſtraints, which the Goſpel lays upon us, are no more than are neceſſary, for the bringing under Subjection our ſenſual Luſts and Appetites, which would otherwiſe be an intolerable Shame and Reproach to us; no more than are neceſſary to keep us from *ſetting our Affections* too much *upon this World and the things of it*, and to prepare and diſpoſe us for the enjoyment of another Life, infinitely more agreeable to a rational Nature, than this, for ever and ever. And what then, in the name of Reaſon, hath any Man to object againſt this? I.

this? Will he call himself a Man, and will he not live like one? Would he be admir'd for his Reason, and yet himself dis-regard and despise it? When GOD hath made him of one of the noblest and upper-most Ranks of Beings, would he degrade himself, and make himself more Vile, even *than the Beasts that Perish?* No, *I beseech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of* GOD, *that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy acceptable to* GOD, *which is your reasonable service.*

Rom. 12. 1.

II. *Secondly*, Our *Gratitude*; in the Words of St. *Paul*, which I just now mention'd, you find the *Mercies* of GOD urg'd as an Argument to perswade Men to lead *Holy* and truly Christian Lives. And surely they must needs appear to be a very strong and powerful one, for this purpose, to any Man that seriously considers how numberless and unspeakably great they have been towards us. After all that GOD has done for us, in our *Creation*, *Preservation*, and, above all, our *Redemption*, by the Death and Passion of his *only begotten*, and most *dearly beloved* Son, whom he *spared not, but delivered up for us all.* After all this, we must have *Hearts* harder than *Adamant*, if we are not affected with a most *tender*, *deep*, and *lasting* Sense of this his *Love* towards us. And this Sense of his infinite Love and Kindness towards us, cannot but beget in us a most *ardent* and *intense Love* towards him; and, naturally consequent upon this, a most earnest desire to make him all the returns of Love that we can, by studying to please him in all things,

Rom. 8. 32. Zech. 7. 12.

to

to do his Will before our own, and to *keep his Commandments*, whatsoever it may cost us.

Thirdly, Our *Justice*, which, as it doth exact from us an universal Obedience to all GOD's Commandments, as a most just Debt from all his Creatures to him; so doth it more especially require at our Hands a performance of all those solemn Vows and Promises, by which we have, over and over, engag'd our selves, to have our *Conversation as becometh the Gospel of Christ*. As in our *Baptism*, our *Confirmation*, our *Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ*, our ordinary *Prayers*, *Publick* and *Private*, and more particularly those which we have offered up to GOD, in the Day of *Sickness* and *Adversity*, and at the times of publick *Sorrow* and *Humiliation* for Sin. And can we possibly be so foolish as to think that all these Vows and Promises will stand for nothing? Is it so very heinous and foul a Crime to *Lie* to Man, and is it none at all to *Lie* to *GOD*, and to the *Holy Ghost*? Can we be so ready to call one another to account for *breach of Promise*, and judge it a necessary piece of Honour so to do? And can we be so stupid as to believe, that GOD alone is regardless of his Honour, and takes no notice whether Men make good their Vows to him or no? No, let us not deceive our selves; there is not one of all these Vows and Promises, but what is *noted in GOD's Book*; not one that we shall not be call'd to a strict account for, at the Last Day. GOD is infinitely more jealous of his Honour, as he hath infinitely more reason, than we can possibly be of ours; and therefore we may assure our selves, that he will not be *mocked* by us, but, as we have

2 Cor. 8. 11. pretended to him a *readiness to will*, so he will expect from us, at our utmost Peril, a *Performance* also.

Lastly. *Lastly*, Our *Interest*: And what is there that we can possibly think of under this Head, that doth not powerfully plead for such *a Conversation as becometh the Gospel of Christ*? What is there that we can *in reason* wish for or desire, that this is not the most ready and likely way to obtain for us?

Do we desire the *outward* Enjoyments of this World, *Riches*, *Honour*, *Power*, &c. what way so likely to obtain these, as by the goodness of our Lives, to engage *God* on our side, who is the *Giver* of them all? Nay, and to engage Men too, who will hereby be invited, more than by any other thing whatsoever, to *Love* us, to *Respect* us, to *Trust* us, to *Serve* us, to *Rejoyce* in our *Prosperity* and *Advancement*, and to *Help* towards it all they can.

Or do we, like wiser Men, desire those *inward* Enjoyments of *Contentment of Mind*, of *Fearlessness* of *Dangers*, *Afflictions*, *Sickness*, nay, even *Death* it self, of a *chearful* and *merry* Heart, of a Mind *undisturbed* by *Lusts* and *Passions*, of *peace* of Conscience, and that yet more desirable *peace of GOD, which passeth all Understanding*? Where, I beseech you, are all these to be found, but in the Life of a good Christian? Where, but in the Religion of him, who both had them all himself in the highest degree, and had Power to bestow them on whomsoever he should please, and has actually promis'd them to all his *faithful* Followers and Disciples.

To

To ſay all at once, Do we deſire to avoid everlaſting Miſery, and to obtain everlaſting Happineſs? There is but one way of doing this, and that is, by becoming *holy in all manner of Converſation, by perfecting Holineſs in the fear of GOD*, and ſo rendering our ſelves *meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* 1 *Pet.* 1. 15. 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. *Coloſ.* 1. 12.

There will come a Day, believe me there will, (but why do I ſay believe me? Believe your own *Reaſon* and *Conſciences*, believe the *Wiſeſt* and *Holieſt* of *Men* or *Angels*, nay, or even but believe *God* himſelf, who cannot poſſibly deceive you) when GOD ſhall *judge the World in Righteouſneſs, and give to every Man according to his Deeds; to them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, have ſought for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, Eternal Life:* But to them *who have been Contentious, and have not obeyed the Truth, but obeyed Unrighteouſneſs, Indignation, and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every Soul of them:* A Day, when the Bleſſed Saviour of the World will no longer appear to be that mean and inconſiderable Perſon, that ſome Men would now make of him; but ſhall be *reveal'd from Heaven, with his holy Angels, in Flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that knew not GOD, and obeyed not his Goſpel:* A Day of *Darkneſs* and *Gloominеſs*, of *Wrath* and *Fierce Anger*, of *Horror* and *Amazement*: When *Sinners ſhall be afraid*, and the *Hypocrites ſhall be ſurpriz'd with fearfulneſs:* When the boldeſt and moſt daring Sinner, that ever liv'd, ſhall *Sneak* and *Crouch*, ſhall *Weep* and *Wail*, ſhall be *Confounded* and *hang down his Head*, and be ready to give Ten Thouſand Worlds, if he could be worth them, for ſo much as one Smile or Glimpſe of Mercy, from the once neglected

Acts 17. 31. *Rom.* 2. 6, 7, 8, 9. 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 7, 8.

lected and despised Jesus: A Day, when there shall be
Revel. 6. 15,16,17. *no respect of Persons with* GOD; but the *Kings of the Earth, and the great Men, and the rich Men, and the chief Captains, and the mighty Men, and the Free-Man,* as well as the *Bond-Man, shall hide themselves in the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Mountains,* and shall say *to the Mountains and Rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb; for the great Day of his Wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?*

Psal. 2. *Be wise now therefore,* O my Brethren; more especially, *be instructed, ye that are Princes and Judges of the Earth*; *Ye,* into whose Hands GOD has put such vast Powers and Opportunities of being and doing Good: *Ye,* who have such large Accounts to make out at the Day Judgment: *Ye,* whose fall, from the height of *Temporal* Grandeur and Prosperity, into the lowest Abyss of *Eternal* Wretchedness and Misery, will make your Case, if you should miscarry, much more intolerable than that of other Men. O that ye would be perswaded to *serve the Lord with fear,* and to *rejoyce unto him with reverence*: That ye would *Kiss the Son,* sincerely and entirely obey him, *lest he be Angry, and so ye Perish from the right way: For, if his Wrath be kindled, yea, but a little*; much more, if it be kindled to that great Degree, to which it most certainly will be at the great and terrible *Day of Wrath*: *Blessed,* yea for ever Blessed, shall all those be, *that put their Trust in Him.*

FINIS.